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C.B. ANDERSON

**Nine/Eleven, Twenty-Four/Seven**

The sky is blue, but only after dawn  
has come to rouse the children. Clouds are gray  
when called upon to save a thirsty lawn  
from fatal desiccation. Not a day

goes by without a crew of bureaucrats  
on hand to check the status of the sod.  
The greenest grass exists in habitats  
beyond the stratosphere.

If I were God,

there'd be no Sunday – only Saturdays,  
for recreation needs no day of rest –  
and there would be no workday interphase  
to water weekends down. Perhaps it's best

that I am not the all-sufficient Master  
who separates the morning from the gloam,  
but would it be a terrible disaster  
if now and then I felt I'd found a home?

Who knows? So here I am, again too much  
the fussy planner, less inclined to do  
than to consider. Patience is a crutch  
for crippled minds that never follow through.

JEAN L. KREILING

## **The Game**

*Nobody can be good all the time. Or bad all the time. We took turns.*

– Barbara Kingsolver, *Animal Dreams*

We played the game as carefully  
as children taking turns, for we  
had entered into this affair  
with both our hearts in disrepair,  
and any further injury

would be inflicted equally.  
As if achieving parity  
were all the pleasure we could dare,  
we played. The game

promoted more than rivalry  
and less than love; consistency  
and comparable wounds laid bare  
were nearly all we had to share.  
Well-trained in reciprocity,  
we played the game.

CLAUDIA GARY

**To a Former Associate, on Finding a Photo of Familiar-Looking Flower Children**

Blindfolded in the backwoods,  
you walk to find samadhi  
and learn to trust. The real goods  
come later, for the body.

Maybe there is more to it,  
but hey, these are the 70s:  
Don't question why you do it,  
don't let them think you're ill-at-ease.

This moment's not immortal,  
nor even of high quality.  
Its picture is a portal  
that opens into jollity.

Why, then, had you not seen it?  
With cameras that had film in them,  
a photo of one minute  
could turn up next millennium.

BRODIE GRESS

## **Gardening**

While digging up the dirt, I asked you why  
you liked your gardening. You didn't say,  
so quiet as I fumbled through the lay  
with child thumbs. Then, slow and fast as a sigh,  
we aged. Our tools rusted, pastime past its time,  
the mother-son connection growing frail.  
My door you creaked, that tell of rattling pail,  
now irked the boy who chose to stay inside.

As children travel, roots sprawl and grow,  
and I call back home. The how we are is sown  
in ground the how we were is buried in,  
sediments of sentiments now said by kin.  
The tenderness I thought we failed to mend  
is tended to by digging up again.

TOBY SPEED

### **Gardening Tips**

Don't dress your plants in woolen pants  
or serve them lemonade  
if you don't want your beans to wilt,  
your liverwort to fade.

Morose mimosas get that way  
from wearing shoes too tight,  
and oleanders shouldn't be  
allowed to roam at night.

Long shopping trips make dahlias flop  
and jades get in a funk,  
while driving with the windows up  
makes honeysuckles sulk.

Don't call your potted friends rude names  
and otherwise be odious,  
or you'll end up with spineless vines  
and weebegone begonias.

GAIL WHITE

**Vain Question**

What were you doing, my cats,  
the day the burglars broke in?  
They spared you, taking instead  
the new TV and my rings.

We found the front door open  
and you walking in and out.  
I suspect you both looked on  
big-eyed, never raised one shout

for help or called 911.  
It all must have seemed to you  
just another of those strange things  
that two-legged beings do.

So the burglars did their job  
and departed, unfoiled, uncursed.  
We called the police next day,  
but we fed you first.

BARDIA SINAE

**Bob Snow**

*for Spencer Gordon*

Bob Snow has a posse, that spotless dalmatian.  
Why yes, let's tickle his midriff. Our ten  
crayon piglet carnations go bloom!  
Share your eraser or draw in your room.

Bob Snow is an aardvark, his ears up like so.  
A regular grass-huffing pickle-fart romp.  
Let's click on a heart-shaped emoji for Mom.

Isn't that precious? He's holding up traffic.  
Coughing up Lego he ate, blood on a stick,  
haha! Is it time for a bath yet? Shampoo?  
That Bollywood song we shimmy our hands to?

Us and Bob Snow are going for dinner:  
a scrunchie, a whole thing of Timbits, a six  
of hearts. Oh how he sneezes and loves what he licks.

CLAUDIA GARY

**Elements**

Life is a thing I salvage  
out of the everyday:  
dropped feathers, pennies, shellfish,  
white keys that will not play.  
How can you know you cherish  
the nest wherein you stay?  
A peacock from its plumage  
can never walk away.

MARTIN ELSTER

### **The Fledgling**

Hopping around the parking lot,  
oil-streaked and stovetop-hot,  
her young ignores the shrieks of “danger  
drawing near!” But I’m no stranger.

I’ve seen her perched atop the fence,  
her deep red tint in evidence.  
But when her fearless flyer smacks  
a car, something in me reacts.

As she observes with anxious eye,  
I clutch him close. He fights to fly  
from fingers kind yet as unbending  
as bone and not used to befriending

robins. But I rush to bring  
this frightened one inside. I wing  
it playing vet and stroke his head.  
He shuts his eyes. He must be fed,

I know. She had been busy schooling  
him to fly; now I sit fooling  
with this vulnerable guest.  
I’d set him free, but where’s her nest?

How to lead him to grass and clover,  
where fledglings will not be run over.  
To guide him to the caterpillars.  
To guard him from the robin killers.

JAMES MCKEE

## **Tu Quoque**

As I click through the news feed, my inner Robespierre  
Curtly demands  
The severed heads of all whose mulishness  
Hampers his plans.

Pedestalled Justice and pedimented Progress  
Join him, to urge  
Mass-dumpstering the unredeemables  
In an overdue purge.

Reform? Please. While we're pimping our principles out  
To compromise  
And starving our passion in a cage of patience,  
Injustice thrives.

So keep your Solons and your Lincolns, I'm  
In the mood for a Mao,  
Proof that true power means your wants get fulfilled  
Right fucking now.

Ending our long dark night of venal unreason  
Only seems complex:  
As they say Lenin said, if you want the omelet,  
You break the eggs.

By all means, let the act of closure be swift:  
I am no sadist.  
Compute each method's throughput rate – we'll use  
Whichever's greatest.

Think of their strident witless blather transformed  
To a silence so huge  
That it claims us a place in the rankings even higher  
Than the Khmer Rouge.

Since you're still reading, I must assume  
You too keep a list  
Of those who can do this world no finer favor  
Than not to exist.

So an *obersturmführer*, a *génocidaire*,  
And a commissar  
(Stop me if you've heard this) walk one evening  
Into a bar.

The place is packed. They sit. When the bartender comes  
To ask what they'll have,  
The commissar says, "Shots – *for everyone!*"  
I won't tell if you laugh.

OWEN LUCAS

453

“I'm sorry to let you down,”  
I sang carefully to my image in the glass,  
“But you're from my side of town.”  
Donald Rumsfeld was already  
Old, and my go-cart lost in the grass,  
When that song came over me ;  
Oh, long song of maturity,  
That winnows down in me like a wave,  
And will not for a moment let me be.  
I was once the child that looked  
Upon the captains of the world, brave  
In their decorations, those that led,  
And knew nothing of them than  
The colours they composed, the dull  
Thum of their voices. Now a man,  
I know Don Rumsfeld to be  
More than the animated skull  
He once appeared: now I am free  
To appoint him whatever office  
I will, and know I know him best.  
I may stare through my artifice,  
And see that all my knowing is  
Whatever I myself wish to suggest ;  
May laugh and blow myself a kiss.  
Oh, but I am lost to the English rain  
That I had thought to leave behind.  
Donald wavers and is quiet again.  
I will walk down America this year,  
Sing whatever “sorry” I can find,  
Knowing he a ghost, and I a seer.

ROBIN HELWEG-LARSEN

**Chapel Hill Dusk**

I stepped out barefoot in the thickening light,  
The darker darkness of a coming storm,  
The loving air humid with blanket weight,  
The courtyard stones still day-warm underfoot,  
The raucous frogs announcing that they'll mate,  
The fireflies in dark bushes round the lawn,  
And looking at me silently, a fawn.

## CONTRIBUTORS

**C.B. Anderson** was the longtime gardener for the PBS television series, *The Victory Garden*. His book of poems, *Mortal Soup and the Blue Yonder*, was published in 2013 by White Violet Press.

**Jean L. Kreiling** is the author of the recently published collection, *The Truth in Dissonance* (Kelsay Books, 2014). Her work has appeared widely in print and online journals, including *American Arts Quarterly*, *Angle*, *The Evansville Review*, *Measure*, and *Mezzo Cammin*, and in several anthologies. Kreiling is a past winner of the String Poet Prize and the Able Muse Write Prize, and she has been a finalist for the Frost Farm Prize, the Howard Nemerov Sonnet Award, and the Richard Wilbur Poetry Award.

**Claudia Gary**, author of *Humor Me* (David Robert Books, 2006), became a third-time Howard Nemerov Sonnet Award finalist in 2015. Claudia's recent chapbooks *Bikini Buyer's Remorse* (humorous) and *Let's Get Out of Here* (war poems) are available via the email address in [pw.org/content/claudia\\_gary](mailto:pw.org/content/claudia_gary). Her reading of love poems is at the 28-minute mark here: <http://www.blogtalkradio.com/newmercurymedia/2016/02/15/pnn--salute-to-love-2016>.

**Brodie Gress** is a graduate of the Creative Writing class Spring 2014 from the University of Evansville. He has published work in *Forces Literary Journal*, *Polaris Literary Magazine*, and the *Ohio River Review*. He served as a Peace Corps volunteer in Cambodia and is currently substitute teaching and freelance reporting in his hometown in southern Indiana. He hopes to sooner or later enter an M.F.A. graduate program to continue his writing studies.

**Toby Speed** is write-tired and lives in the Upper Valley of New Hampshire. She is the author of seven books for children, including *Two Cool Cows*, an American Bookseller Pick of the List, and *Brave Potatoes*, which was on both *The New York Times'* and *Publishers Weekly's* children's best seller lists. Her poems have recently appeared or will soon appear in *Light*, *Lighten Up Online*, *Boulevard*, *Highlights for Children*, and *The 5-2: Crime Poetry Weekly*.

**Gail White** has appeared in several previous issues of *The Rotary Dial*. She is a regular contributor to formalist poetry journals and has twice won the Howard Nemerov Sonnet Award. Her new book, *Asperity Street*, is now available on Amazon.

**Bardia Sinaee** is a poet living in Toronto. His poems have been published around Canada in places like *Arc*, *The Malahat Review*, *The Walrus* and *Best Canadian Poetry 2015* (Tightrope Books).

**Martin Elster** is a composer and serves as percussionist with the Hartford Symphony Orchestra. His poetry has appeared in *Astropoetica*, *Cahoodaloodaling*, *The Martian Wave*, *Mindflights*, *The Speculative Edge*, *The Rotary Dial*, and in the anthologies *Taking Turns: Sonnets from Eratosphere*, The 2012 and 2015 *Rhysling Anthologies*, *New Sun Rising: Stories for Japan*, *Eccentric Press Poetry Anthology (Volume I)*, and *Poems for a Liminal Age*, among others. His poem, “Walking With the Birds and the Bones Through Fairview Cemetery,” placed first in the Thomas Gray Anniversary Poetry Competition 2014, and his poem, “The Comet Elm,” was awarded third place in the Science Fiction Poetry Association’s 2015 poetry contest.

**James McKee** and his wife live in New York City, in a neighborhood where the 1% seldom go. A New Yorker by birth (and likely by death), he enjoys failing in his dogged attempts to keep pace with the unrelenting and impacted cultural onslaught of late-imperial Manhattan. After taking a degree in English & Philosophy, he held a number of ludicrously unsuitable jobs before spending over a decade as a teacher and administrator at a small special-needs high school. His poetry has appeared or is forthcoming in *The Raintown Review*, *Saranac Review*, *The South Carolina Review*, *THINK*, *f(r)iction*, *The Worcester Review*, *The Lyric*, and elsewhere. He currently works as a private tutor and spends his free time, when not writing or reading, traveling less than he would like and brooding more than he can help.

**Owen Lucas** is a British writer living in Norwalk, Connecticut. His poetry, fiction and translations have been published in more than thirty journals in the U.S., Britain, and Canada. Past credits include *Off the Coast*, *Lost in Thought*, *Contemporary Verse 2*, and *Qwerty*, with new work out soon in *Tirage Monthly*, *Ohio Edit*, *Tribe* and *Free State Review*.

Raised in the Bahamas, holding four passports (Canadian, British, Australian and Jamaican), **Robin Helweg-Larsen** has been living in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, for the past twenty years. His poetry is mostly published in the UK.